

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:

Please insert the following paragraphs between lines 22 and 23 of page 3, line 20:

Fig. 4 is a table showing obtained results for five porous glass base materials.

Fig. 5 is a table showing the core displacement and deformation ratios.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 4, with the following amended paragraph:

~~Table 1~~ Figure 4 below shows the obtained results for the five porous glass base materials.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 6, with the following amended paragraph:

As clearly shown in ~~Table 1~~ Figure 4, both the core displacement and deformation ratios were improved to 0.1 % or lower by setting the transit time through the preheated region at 4.5 hours or longer.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 9, with the following amended paragraph:

[~~Table 1~~ Figure 4]

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 12, with the following amended paragraph:

Five porous glass base materials were sintered under the same conditions as in the example 1 except that the lowering rate is fixed to a constant level of 1.65 mm/min and the length of the insulating member in the heating furnace (corresponding to the preheated region) is set to different values including 400 mm, 420 mm, 450 mm, 500 mm and 600mm. ~~Table 2~~ Figure 5 below shows the results of the example 2.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 17, with the following amended paragraph:

As clearly shown in ~~Table 2~~ Figure 5, both the core displacement and deformation ratios were improved to 0.1 % or lower by setting the transit time through the preheated region at 4.5 hours or longer. Furthermore, the core displacement and deformation ratios were improved to 0.05 % or lower by setting the transit time through the preheated region at 6.0 hours.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 21, with the following amended paragraph:

[~~Table 2~~ Figure 5]